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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 0168
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 7419
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3889
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
TUESDAY, JULY 15, 2009

In Today's Papers

Two Separate Accidents Kill Five Turkish Soldiers in Hakkari, Gumushane
Media outlets report four Turkish soldiers were killed in an "accidental munitions explosion" at the Commando Brigade barracks in Yuksekova in the border province of Hakkari in southeast Turkey. In the eastern Black Sea province of Gumushane, a military vehicle overturned, killing a soldier and wounding 15 others, according to reports.

Turkish Colonel, Sergeant Killed in Traffic Accident in Afghanistan
Mainstream Sabah reports President Gul, prior to flying to Egypt on Tuesday, announced the commander of the Turkish unit in ISAF in Afghanistan, Colonel Faruk Sungur and an unidentified sergeant were killed in a traffic accident on their way back from a visit to the Turkish unit in Mazar-i Sharif. Another military officer travelling with them was seriously injured. Colonel Sungur had earlier served in the Turkish battalion in Kosovo. Gul paid condolences to the families of the martyred soldiers, reports Sabah.

High Court of Appeals (Yargitay) President Gerceker: "Civilian Trials are Against the Constitution"
Mainstream Milliyet reports that Yargitay President Hasan Gerceker, responding to journalists' questions regarding the law allowing military personnel to be tried in civilian courts at a Turkish Bar Association reception, said "These kinds of amendments could be made after long and comprehensive discussions and evaluations. Formally, this law is against article 145 of the Constitution. Laws should be drafted after long evaluations. There are determined rules for this procedure. If those rules were obeyed, such problems would not occur."

Ambassador Jeffrey: "In Our Country Everyone Can Be Tried"
Mainstream Milliyet reports that Ambassador Jeffrey hosted a lunch at his residence yesterday for CHP Istanbul Deputy Ilhan Kesici, CHP Yalova Deputy Muharrem Ince, DTP Diyarbakir Deputy Akin Birdal, and Istanbul Independent Deputy Ahmet Tan. Regarding the recently approved law allowing military personnel to be tried at civilian courts, Ambassador Jeffrey reportedly said, "In our country everyone can be tried. We don't have such problems."

Aliyev: "Armenian Issue Will Not Affect Our Ties with Turkey"
Mainstream Sabah reports that Azeri leader Aliyev sent a message to Turkey from England during his official visit there, saying "The Armenian issue will not affect our relationship with Turkey. I was more comfortable after hearing PM Erdogan's comments saying that the border would not open up until the Karabakh issue is resolved." President Aliyev added, "We are ready to give autonomy at the highest level under the roof of Azerbaijan to the people living in the region. Karabakh will never be recognized as an independent state, even the thought of it is immensely ridiculous."

Nabucco's Hopes Lay in Iraq (Cumhuriyet)
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports that despite the fact that Baghdad earlier announced it could not contribute natural gas to the Nabucco Pipeline Project, recent gas agreements between Turkey and Iraq, plus the agreement between Turkish state companies TPAO and BOTAS and the British Royal Dutch Shell company, have renewed hopes for exploring for natural gas in Iraq, dubbed by some as Nabucco's "most rational source country." Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have backed down on guaranteeing gas for the Nabucco pipeline. Baku struck a gas deal with Moscow recently and Turkmenistan continues to experience problems with the trans-Caspian pipeline. TPAO and BOTAS are to make approximately USD 2 billion of "gas investments" in the Akgaz natural gas basin in the middle of the Mosul, Kirkuk and Tal Afar region in northern Iraq. The natural gas reserves in Iraq are enough to fill the Nabucco pipeline and meet the internal demand, says Cumhuriyet.

Pressure Comes from China to PM Erdogan to Retract His

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Characterization of the Uighur Crackdown as 'Genocide'
The top international story on the front pages today concerns the calls from media in China to PM Erdogan to retract his statements calling the crackdown on the Uighurs in Urumqi 'a type of genocide.' Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet headlines, "The Chinese Are Angry at Erdogan." Mainstream Hurriyet reports, "Chinese state media reacted harshly to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan who described riots in Xinjiang as 'almost genocide.'" Hurriyet notes China Daily told Erdogan to "take back his words," in an editorial headlined "Don't Twist The Facts". According to Hurriyet, another Chinese newspaper, People's Daily, asserted that, "The Chinese people are angry at the Turkish prime minister for using such an expression." Mainstream Sabah reports Murat Salim Esenli, Turkey's ambassador to Beijing, "explained Turkey's red lines to China," by saying, "We are looking into the human rights dimension of the incidents. There should not be human rights violations. Be fair. Perpetrators should be arrested and tried. Don't let Turkish-Chinese relations be disrupted, otherwise it hurts both countries." Mainstream Vatan reports Erdogan's words "stirred China," and "The Chinese press said Erdogan's remarks were a display of irresponsibility," and in retaliation, "Chinese hackers angered at Erdogan caused the web site of the Turkish Embassy (in Beijing) to crash." Liberal Radikal reports, "As ethnic tension in east Turkistan continues, the Chinese administration is gradually raising its voice against Erdogan's characterization of the crackdown on the Uighurs as 'a type of genocide.'" Radikal says China Daily "openly targeted Erdogan."

Editorial Commentary on Uighur Tensions

Bulent Aras wrote in mainstream Sabah, "The Uighur opposition movement is a nonviolent movement, despite continuous efforts by Chinese authorities to label it an 'al Qaeda-like terrorist fundamentalist group.'" There is no other way to end this conflict and tension without China developing a new concept of citizenship that embraces multi ethnic diversity."

Cengiz Candar wrote in liberal Radikal, "The Prime Minister used strong language to react to the Xinjiang events which has caused problems between Beijing and Ankara. Using such strong rhetoric only shows Turkey's foreign policy is shaped according to domestic concerns and it is not helpful to end tensions in any way."

Sami Kohen wrote in mainstream Milliyet, "What is happening in Urumqi, Xinjiang certainly deserves a reaction. On the other hand,

it was interesting to note Ankara's harsh reaction against China while the international community does not even agree on boycotting China or filing a complaint to the UNSC. The Turkish government should be able to pursue a balanced and well measured attitude when it comes to international matters that are of everybody's concern."

Ibrahim Karagul wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak, "It comes as no surprise to see the game attached to the Uighur people's struggle with Al Qaeda. The Western powers are trying to create a conflict with Islam in the Far East. There are also rumors of tensions between Muslims and Hindus in India, so it will be no surprise at all if a Hindu-Muslim conflict erupts there. Turkish foreign policy must take into account all of these potential elements and must ensure that Turkey does not become anybody's Trojan Horse in this ongoing big game."

Arabs Back Turkey's EU Bid

Mainstream Hurriyet reports that a survey on "reflections of Turkey-EU relations in the Muslim world," made by the Open Society Foundation (Acik Toplum Vakfi), revealed that "Arab media, who once accused Turkey of chasing after the EU, now back Turkey's bid to join the EU."

A Trillion-Dollar Hole in the U.S. Budget (Cumhuriyet)

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports on its front page the budget deficit in the U.S. has reached a record high of USD 1.8 trillion

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due to the American Government's increase in public expenditures as well as the rise in unemployment pay and the drop in tax revenues.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- The Court of Appeals (Yargitay) president Hasan Gerceker says the bill envisioning the trial of soldiers by civilian courts runs contrary to the constitution, but adds all must wait for the decision of the Constitutional Court in this issue.
- Shiego Katsu, the World Bank's Regional Vice President for Europe and Central Asia, says Turkey needs to make investments in "health and education" to help its young population cope with the economic crisis.
- On July 19, new smoking restrictions covering all closed public spaces in Turkey will enter into effect.
- Turkey's fundamentalist daily Vakit's columnist Huseyin Uzmez, 77, has been arrested over the sexual molestation of a 14-year old girl.

World

- Greek Cypriots criticized calls for a referendum by the year's end from Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat and President Gul and said they did not expect a settlement in Cyprus this year.
- Farouq al-Qadoumi, general secretary of the Fatah Party, says Mahmoud Abbas was involved in a plot against his late predecessor Yasser Arafat.
- A helicopter operated by a contractor working for NATO's ISAF in Afghanistan crashes in the Helmand province, killing all six civilians aboard.
- Hamas accuses Israel of distributing "libido-increasing chewing gums" in Gaza.

JEFFREY